

What will you give in Exchange for your soul?

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Sermon by Pastor Diana J. Perkins

The Bible is a book that gives us an opportunity to learn lessons from real life characters so we can avoid pitfalls and stumbling blocks that Satan puts in our way to keep us from inheriting the blessings that God has prepared for his people.

If someone said to you, “What would you accept for payment in exchange for being a slave for the rest of your life knowing that you will spend eternity in darkness void of all goodness and life; a place of emptiness with no future?” What would you say? Satan is the master deceiver, the father of lies and he doesn’t give people facts, only empty promises. There is no truth in him.

A woman told me about purchasing a truck from a “friend” recently. She was led to believe that the truck had been routinely maintained, only minor work was needed for repairs, and she supposedly gave her a good deal. After the purchase, the new owner took the truck to a garage to have it repaired to pass inspection. The mechanic gave her bad news that the truck would need extensive work in order to pass inspection. The previous owner had not told the truth. The bill was high and after her husband picked up the truck, went down the road a few miles, the transmission blew. The friend who sold the truck to them would not return money; it was “Buy as is” deal. That is exactly what happens when people search for their treasures in a worldly fashion. Sure looks good when you start out; it doesn’t take long before the seams start coming apart and before long, the price you pay is far greater than you ever anticipated and sorrow and heartache fall into your hands leaving your life shattered.

Eve, in the garden, was in paradise. The rule was simple; eat of the tree of life and live forever in this wonderful place where God would communicate and walk with her and Adam every cool evening. Only one tree was off limits. From everything that surrounded them that brought so much joy, peace, tranquility and blessing, they were told that one tree was not to be eaten for in the day that they ate of it, they would die.

Satan, with his sly, crafty slippery tongue convinced Eve that God was unfair and was withholding something good from her. She would be like God if she learned evil as well as good. The promise of gaining knowledge apart from God was compelling. She looked at it and made a decision. It was pleasant to the eye, it looked like a good fruit to eat and she longed to know as much as her Creator. She gained fear, abandonment, homelessness, pain and sorrow. Her son, Cain murdered her son Abel. The curse that engulfed the universe was more than she ever imagined. She and Adam lost their inheritance for Satan claimed to be the god of this world. All creation and creatures suffered from the fall.

When God asked Cain concerning the whereabouts of Abel, he replied, “How should I know? Am I my brother’s keeper?” He didn’t even feel obliged to tell the Lord God the truth. God put a curse on Cain. He would be homeless, a wanderer and the ground

would never yield produce for him ever again because he spilled his brother's blood on the ground. Cain complained about his punishment saying that it was too much for him to bear. He was driven from the presence of God and would never again have a safe place called home to live in. He was afraid that he would be killed, so God in his mercy put a mark on Cain so no one would kill him.

God told Moses to confront Pharaoh in his name and tell him to let his people go into the desert so they could honor God with a celebration there. Pharaoh replied in this manner? "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I refuse to let you and your people go!" Pharaoh then oppressed the people even more and made their lives unbearable. God began to send plagues onto Egypt until it became a wasteland and the last plague brought death to the firstborn son and animals in every Egyptian household. Then Pharaoh sent them away but changed his mind, followed them and when they crossed over the Red Sea, his army followed and God caused the waters to overflow them and they drowned.

The call of Jesus Christ demands an immediate response to obedience. If you read the gospels, notice that when Jesus said, "Follow me!" that each one of them left whatever they were doing and they followed the Lord immediately. Peter and John left their nets, Matthew left off collecting taxes, Matthew 19:27

Not only did they leave everything behind to follow the Lord, but they obeyed whatever the Lord commanded. In Acts 8:26, we learn that Philip was in the midst of a great revival of winning souls for Jesus Christ when the Lord's angel told him to go south along the desert road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza. So Philip left. It just so happened that an important Ethiopian officer was riding in his chariot along this road as he was returning from Jerusalem where he had gone to worship and was heading back home. He was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah. The Spirit of God told Philip to catch up with that chariot. Philip ran up close and heard the man reading the Scriptures and Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. He responded that he would not be able to understand what Isaiah was talking about unless someone helped him. He invited Philip to join him in his chariot and Philip explained the gospel of Jesus Christ to him and he believed. They came to a place where there was water and the Ethiopian asked what hindered him from being baptized. They stopped the chariot and they both went into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came out of the water, God's took Philip away and the official never saw him again. He was happy as he went home.

When the Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision, he answered, "here am I." When the Lord told him to go and pray for Saul who had formerly persecuted the believers in Jesus name, Ananias told him that Saul had wreaked havoc among the saints by killing them, threatening them, and throwing them in prison. Yet Jesus told him to go for He would send Saul to foreigners, kings and the people of Israel to tell them about Jesus and he would show Saul what great things he would suffer for Jesus name sake. He immediately arose and obeyed the voice of God.

In Acts 10, Peter had a vision that prepared him to take the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile. The Jews had no dealings with Gentiles up to this point, but when the Lord spoke to Peter while he was in prayer on the rooftop of Simon's house near the sea in Joppa, he obeyed. Cornelius was told by the Lord's angel to send some men to Joppa to ask for Peter and have him come to Cornelius house. While Peter was thinking about the vision that he had, the Holy Spirit told him that three men were looking for him. He was to hurry down and go with them. He was not to worry for God had sent them. Peter immediately obeyed. Peter welcomed them in and invited them to spend the night and early the next morning Peter went with them and while he was explaining the gospel the Holy Spirit fell on all that were in the house and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter then baptized them in the name of Jesus.

The disciples asked Jesus "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of God?" He placed a child in their midst and told them that unless they were converted, were humble, and submissive to God's will as a little child they would not enter the kingdom of God. Matthew 18:2-4. In John 3:16, it says that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes on him should not perish but have everlasting life." We are to take that message to those who need a Savior and give them an opportunity to receive Christ. The Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost. We are called to go to the lost, the least and the last. We are to avoid evil at the same time we are carrying our cross as a lamb among wolves. Will everyone embrace our message? No, but we are not called to be successful; we are called to be faithful and to serve others. Jesus is the author of our faith and he is the one who will impart faith to those who hear the message. Faith comes by hearing and hearing from the Word of God. Romans 10:17.

We must leave the results to Jesus Christ. Jesus told us that in this life we will suffer tribulation. We have not been guaranteed an easy road as Christians. We will be tempted, but God promises with every temptation we will be shown an escape. He promises to go before us, never to leave nor forsake us, and whatever comes our way in forms of persecution, he will reward us and it will be worth everything when he returns.

God's love is unmatched and his power is unsearchable. We cannot fathom his greatness and the most wonderful, amazing truth is that he loves and cares for every one of us!

King David said in Psalms 8, "I often think of the heavens your hands have made, and of the moon and stars you put in place. Then I ask "Why do you care about us humans? Why are you concerned about us weaklings? You have made us a little lower than the angels and have crowned us with glory and honor." We love him because he first loved us and gave his life for our redemption. I pray that you will choose the narrow gate that leads to eternal life. The broad gate has many travelling on it, but it leads to destruction.